

Mentors in the Kitchen (from inside)

hallway next to the kitchen and called out to him.

He let the young man know that a Meals on Wheels senior on at least three occasions commended the Corps member for his good nature and professional manner when he delivered her a hot meal on a recent run.

This was a breakthrough with the woman who had not been easy to talk with, and Brandon was genuinely grateful for the young man's help. Furthermore, this kind of encouragement and mentorship can be invaluable for young people who have experienced disappointment and hardship throughout their lives.

Brandon's own story and friendly, open manner has made him a strong mentor for young people who participate in Interfaith Neighbors' Youth Corps program which helps students to work toward a GED and provide community service throughout Monmouth County.

Brandon, who is 40, grew up in Asbury Park Village and has worked since he was 12 years old. He and his fiancée Lanece Ferguson, each have two children of their own and a six-month-old daughter together.

He graduated from Asbury Park High School in 1992 where he was on the track, baseball and football teams.

"My mom stayed on me to do schoolwork, and I loved sports so I did everything to stay on the teams," Brandon said.

He and Lanece live on Springwood Avenue on the Asbury Park-Neptune border. He came to Interfaith about three years ago seeking assistance for his girlfriend after her ceiling caved in. At the same time, he asked for a job for himself and started out as a backup driver. He has been a full-time driver for two years and often takes a Corps member along on his route delivering meals.

"A lot of these kids—I grew up with their parents," he said. "I'll hear from someone who asks if I will keep an eye out for them."

Chef Baptiste also says he enjoys having the Youth Corps members come into the kitchen and learn some aspects of his work.



Louis Baptiste Pothier

Brandon Terry

"It means a lot to me," Baptiste said. "Some of them have troubles and it's very hard for them to talk about it. But you know, I know."

Baptiste, who is 53, is among the first to come in the morning, usually by 4 or 5 a.m. to cook the meals long before other staff members and drivers arrive.

He grew up in Aquin, Haiti, about 85 miles southwest of Port-au-Prince, and came to the United States in 1989.

He and his wife, Marlene, a nurse's aide, have five children, and live on Norwood Avenue in Long Branch in a home they now own after Interfaith Neighbors helped them make the transition from a two-bedroom home they rented in Ocean Township.

When he goes home by about 1:00 or 1:30 p.m. each day, it's time for his own family and the sports teams he loves—the Yankees, the Knicks, the Jets. He's often driving older children to and from jobs because they don't drive yet, or younger children to after-school programs. "Interfaith Neighbors is like a family," said Baptiste.

Direct from the Director (continued)

The confidence you have placed in us is truly humbling. I hope, in the face of all the issues that confront you on a daily basis, you can take a moment and share some inner peace with me knowing that together we have touched so many lives of those in need.

I wish you many blessings throughout the new year, and ask that you pray for us as we continue to reach out to those who seek our assistance.

*Joe Marmora,
Executive Director*

Direct from the Director

As the year comes to an end, I could not help but reflect back and realize what an extraordinary year it was.

We celebrated our twenty-fifth anniversary, honoring three very special people and organization that have come into our life.

During these past twenty-five years, there was not a day that I didn't think about Interfaith Neighbors and how it could be better—like the book I once read about how we could go from "Good to Great." While I well realize that we are far from great, we have come a long way.

We estimate that we have assisted over 4,000 working poor families with rent or mortgage assistance, helping them to avoid eviction, homelessness and foreclosure.

Our senior meals program (Meals on Wheels) has prepared, in our own central kitchen, over 7,000,000 meals for well over 50,000 senior and disabled people.

We have built and/or renovated forty-four houses and sold them to first-time home buyers who are now living the American dream of home ownership.

Our disadvantaged youth program has helped many youngsters obtain their GED certificates and drivers' licenses, enter college, have full-time jobs and certainly to live a better life than when they came to us.

We have worked to revitalize Asbury Park's West Side (an almost impossible task). Our 27,500 sq. ft. three-story building, Springwood Center, became the first new commercial construction since the riots of the early 1960's.

I have outlined all of this because I want to acknowledge how instrumental you, our donors, have been for many of these accomplishments.

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A Good Suit When You Need It



There's no doubt that we are able to do our job here at Interfaith Neighbors because of great partnerships with other groups and individuals, agencies and corporations. And Lunch Break in Red Bank certainly is one of them.

Interfaith Neighbors has had a long-standing relationship working with Lunch Break. Executive Director Gwendolyn Love serves on Interfaith Neighbors' board of directors. Their long-time "Suited For Success" program now helps our own Monmouth County Youth Corps members receive smart looking suits during each 12-week corps program.

Sharda Jetwani, program director at Lunch Break, said the suits for men and women are donated at Lunch Break and are targeted for individuals needing appropriate attire when re-entering the work force or for a special occasion.

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A Good Suit... (from front)

Lunch Break linked up with the Youth Corps members last year with the help of Pam Major, Youth Corps' transition coach and Inice Hennessy who coordinates the clothing program, Jetwani said.

"It's great for our young people to get professional business attire so they're prepared for all types of interviews, Pam Major said. "It's important that our young people be able to navigate in all aspects of society and this gives them back that leverage."

Meg Flores, director of the Youth Corps, said it's a special time when the participants first put on their new outfits. Like most of us getting dressed up with a new suit or dress, she said, that suit "totally transforms them."

Kula Urban Farm Project on Horizon

Interfaith Neighbors has received a grant from the Mary Owen Borden Foundation of \$150,000 to be used over the next three years to help underwrite the new Kula Urban Farm Project on Asbury Park's West Side.

The foundation, based in Rumson, is a longtime supporter of Interfaith's work, and previously gave a \$150,000 grant for the new Business Development Center which opened in 2012 at our Springwood Center in Asbury. The foundation's current giving primarily targets the needs of disadvantaged youth and their families with grants going to nonprofit entities in Trenton, Asbury Park and Long Branch.

The Kula Urban Farm will serve as a commercial business selling plants, vegetables and leafy greens for profit with a portion of the farm to be used as a community entrepreneurial garden. Farm food that can be directly consumed by nearby residents and businesses benefits the growers, consumers and the community.

"We are ever so grateful for this multi-year grant from the Mary Owen Borden Foundation," said Associate Executive Director Paul McEvily. "The grant allows us to expand our successful Kula Café initiative by launching yet another social

enterprise on the West Side of Asbury Park. The Kula Urban Farm initiative will create jobs and spur area economic development," McEvily added. "The yield from farm operations will meet local market needs and the farm-to-table concept will benefit neighborhood residents who frequent the Kula Café and other local restaurants."

Plans for the community portion of the enterprise would see residents and community members who volunteer at the farm a certain number of hours take home produce or receive a share of any revenue generated by that portion of the farm.

Farewell Lila Singer

Board Member Lila Singer likes very much one of legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden's famous quotes: "Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out."

It's a good way to live and Lila, whose religious faith, great compassion and strong commitment to action have led her well in life, is now leaving us to relocate to Durham, N.C.

But don't think it means she'll be taking it easy. This lifetime volunteer doesn't plan to stop volunteering and expects to take up her new life in good spirit.

Lila and her late husband Max, who died in November, 2009, helped in the formative stages of Interfaith Neighbors with Executive Director Joe Marmora when many congregations of faith came together in 1988 to prevent homelessness by assisting working families through a financial crisis.

As the social action chair at their Monmouth Reform Temple where Lila has been active throughout the years, she remembers there "was no question we'd be involved" in Interfaith.



Max, retired from his engineering career, served on Interfaith's board and worked as a volunteer. Lila became a board member after Max died.

Lila and Max were forces of nature in their own rights and formed a natural collaboration. After meeting in New York and marrying, they raised two sons and a daughter in their Wyckham Road home in Tinton Falls which they bought when it was brand new in the 1950s.

She grew up in the Jackson Heights section of Queens, went to Hunter College High School in Manhattan and then to Queens College. She earned her master's degree at Monmouth College (now Monmouth University).

Her three children are Joseph, a professor at Harvard Law School; Robert, a family physician with Massachusetts General Hospital; and Gale Adland, executive director of Meals on Wheels of Durham. Lila has six grandchildren and two great granddaughters.

She is a doer who shuns getting attention for what she has done. Nonetheless, here is just some of her work:

- She taught fourth and fifth grade at Colts Neck Elementary School and was president of the Colts Neck Education Association.
- She was president of the Greater Red Bank Area League of Women Voters, and of the Inter-League Organization of the League of Women Voters.
- She was vice president of the Red Bank chapter of Hadassah, and a volunteer with Family Promise.
- Active in Monmouth Reform Temple, she had been a vice president and chaired several committees. In 1987, she and Max went to Russia and met with families in the town of Refusenik who were trying to leave the Soviet Union.

Lila says she marvels at the work Interfaith Neighbors has done and continues to do, from housing the homeless, to building new homes, to the new Asbury Park Kula Café training young people for jobs, to Youth Corps participants taking part in the

Need to Feed program and handing out hot meals on Springwood Avenue.

Joe Marmora, in many ways speaking for the Interfaith family, wrote Lila after receiving her resignation letter that she and Max were "an integral part of starting and growing" Interfaith and that he will cherish the memories and friendship he had with both.

Volunteer with Meals on Wheels—March for Meals

Have you ever thought about becoming a volunteer, but didn't know how to get started? Do you worry about how you can fit volunteering into your busy schedule? Then join us Wednesday, April 30th at the Asbury Park Senior Center in Springwood Center to find out how easy it is to become a Meals on Wheels volunteer!

You will learn all about our nutrition program and have the chance to accompany a driver for one hour helping to deliver meals to homebound seniors. Volunteers for our March for Meals event are asked to gather at the Asbury Park Senior Center, located at 1201 Springwood Ave. in Asbury Park, NJ at 9:30 a.m. Volunteers will be treated to a special breakfast program before heading out into the community at 11:00 a.m.

To register, please contact **Sandi Silber** or **Sally Maloney** at 732-775-0525 by April 22nd. If you can't join us, please consider a donation to help us continue to provide meals to seniors in your area. Please join us on April 30th—so no senior goes hungry!

Mentors in the Kitchen

Brandon Terry and Louis Baptiste Pothier were recognized recently by Meg Flores, director of the Youth Corps program, for going beyond the call of duty to mentor the young people. "I just see upstanding men which makes them such good role models," she said.

Interfaith Neighbors' driver Brandon saw one of our Youth Corps members walking by in the

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